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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to explore the impact that exposure to conflict management had on emotionally and behaviorally disordered high school students. High school students who participated in this study were from the west coast of central Florida. The practicum objectives were for students to show a 25% increase in the use of conflict management strategies; a 20% decrease in the number of discipline referrals; and decrease in conflictual behavior by 25%. The results exceeded the objectives' outcome projections. The target group participated in peer mediation training and worked with teachers and staff to use the training with classroom conflicts. Appendices include student and staff pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys, a parent letter, and peer mediation referral/report/contract form. (Author/JAG)

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THE EFFECTS OF PEER MEDIATION TRAINING ON CONFLICTS AMONG BEHAVIORALLY AND EMOTIONALLY DISORDERED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Kathryn Kirleis

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova Southeastern degree of Educational Specialist.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

June 1, 1995

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Abstract

The Effects of Peer Mediation Training on Conflicts Among Emotionally and Behaviorally Disordered High School Students.
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This practicum was developed and implemented to explore the impact that exposure to conflict management had on emotionally and behaviorally disordered high school students. The objectives of this practicum were for students to show a 25 percent increase in the use of conflict management strategies; a 20 percent decrease in the number of discipline referrals; and a decrease in conflictual behavior by 25 percent. The results exceeded the objectives' outcome projections. The target group participated in peer mediation training and worked with teachers and staff to use the training with classroom conflicts. Appendices include student and staff pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys, a parent letter, and a peer mediation referral/report/contract form.

Authorship Statement/Document Release

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I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my work presented here can earn similar respect.

Kathryn Kirlin
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Table of Contents

Page

Title Page i

Abstract ii

Authorship/Document Release iii

Project Verification iv

Table of Contents v

List of Tables vii

Table 1 9

Table 2 10

Table 3 43

Table 4 44

Chapters

I. Purpose 1

II. Research and Solution Strategy 14

III. Methods 32

IV. Results 41

V. Recommendations 49

Reference List 52

Appendices

Appendix A: Target Behavior Form 57

Appendix B: Pre-Intervention Student Survey 59

Appendix C: Pre-Intervention Staff Survey 61

Appendix D: Referral, Report, Contract Form.....63
Appendix E: Parent Letter.....65
Appendix F: Post-Intervention Student Survey.....67
Appendix G: Post-Intervention Staff Survey.....69

List of Tables

Page

1. Student Response to Pre-Intervention Conflict Survey.....9

2. Staff Response to Pre-Intervention Conflict Survey.....10

3. Staff Response to Post-Intervention Conflict Survey.....43

4. Student Response to Post-Intervention Conflict Survey.....44

CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

The setting for this practicum was a public high school located in the central part of a county on the west coast of central Florida. The county in which the high school was situated contained suburban areas in the western and eastern part in contrast to the largely rural and semi-rural central part.

The county consisted of 294,997 residents who lived in 128,186 households located within the county's 738 square miles, recorded in 1993 statistics. The ethnic/racial makeup of the county consisted of 96.3 percent White, 3.3 percent Hispanic, 1.9 percent Black, 1.0 percent designated as other, 0.5 percent Asian and 0.3 percent Native American. The 95,448 families earned an average income of $29,169 and consisted of an average of 2.5 members. Eighteen percent of the population was between 0-17 years of age. Twenty-nine percent of the population was between 18-44. Twenty-one percent was between 45-64. Thirty-two percent was 65 years of age or older (Committee of 100, 1994).

The school district employed over 4,300 staff members and was described as the fourteenth largest district in Florida. The county's 33,891

students were taught in 47 public schools by 2,153 teachers. One thousand sixty-nine students attended 13 private schools and were taught by 100 teachers. All of the county's schools were accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, a distinction not shared by the three surrounding counties with a collective population of over two million.

This high school, built in 1975, housed 1,463 students in grades nine through twelve living within the school's catchment area of 150 square miles. The ethnic and racial makeup of the school's population consisted of: 92.7 percent White, 1.2 percent Black, 4.9 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Asian and .2 percent Native American.

The student population consisted of mainstream students as well as students who were in the following exceptional student education (ESE) placements: educable mentally handicapped (EMH), specific learning disabled (SLD), hearing impaired (HI) serving several counties, physically impaired (PI), severely emotionally disturbed (SED), and emotionally handicapped (EH). Thirty-four percent of the high school's population consisted of students designated as exceptional. The county's SED high school population was distributed in four of the county's eight high schools. Each of the county's eight high schools had EH classes.

Additionally, the high school housed the following dropout prevention programs: Cyesis, a teen parenting program, Intensive Accelerated Program (IAP), Resource Assistance Program (RAP) and the Performance-Based Diploma Program (PBDP). The high school

bused students taking specialized vocational classes to a vocational school and provided an extensive vocational program called TechPrep as well as On-the-Job-Training (OJT) programs and Diversified Cooperative Training (DCT) programs.

The author earned degrees of Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) specializing in clinical practice. The author's position as school social worker included responsibility for student advocacy, coordination of the full service clinic, education, assessment, referral, and counseling. This position was funded by a Full Service School Grant through the Florida Department of Education, Health and Rehabilitative Services, and the Department of Labor. Responsibilities also included working with parents, teachers, administrators and community agencies. With an extensive background in education, substance abuse prevention and intervention, and clinical mental health assessment and treatment the author was certified as a social worker (C.S.W.) and held permanent teacher's certification in common branch subjects, grades one through six, in a northeastern state. The author was also certified as a school social worker by the Florida Department of Education and the National Association of Social Workers and earned the credential of Licensed Clinical Social Worker (L.C.S.W.) from the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. The author was listed in the Register of Clinical Social Workers as a Qualified Clinical Social Worker as well as having held status as Diplomate of Clinical Social Work.

The author participated in peer mediation training of mainstream students and program implementation as well as having gained mainstream staff support within the school setting. The school's administration was interested in the reduction of precipitous factors leading to conflict and violence. The district office supported this effort and money had been set aside for training materials.

Problem Statement

Violence and conflict among high school students in emotionally handicapped (EH) and severely emotionally disturbed (SED) classes interfered with their safety and time spent in academic pursuits. Deficiency in pro-social behavior skills was evidenced by the general increase in frequency of discipline referrals received by these students over time. Frequently emotional and behavioral disorders manifested as classroom interference and escalated into conflictual interaction and physical acting out behaviors which took time away from the learning environment.

There were contributing factors to effective behavior management at the author's work setting. The school population came from a widespread geographic area representing indigent White families who worked in unskilled and low paying semi-permanent jobs, and middle class agrarian, service industry, semi-professional and professional families. The population existed for years as predominantly White, rural and semi-rural. There was a slow growing Black population, a rapidly expanding Hispanic population from a nearby metropolitan region to the immediate south and a growing suburban population that supported the nearby

urban area. Cultural diversity was relatively new to this area.

Established local groups had expressed antagonism to the newly arriving groups. The school staff was predominantly White with three or four Hispanic employees and no Black employees. The deficiencies in exposure to the incoming groups lead to a lack of familiarity which contributed to an increase in tension and conflicts. There had been student acknowledgement of evidence of Ku Klux Klan and White Supremacist activity. In addition, the EH and SED populations came from a larger geographical area and endured lengthy bus rides of up to an hour arriving at school with an exacerbated lower frustration tolerance level making it more difficult to respond to conflicts. It was apparent that the capabilities of staff and students to manage conflicts needed improvement in order to decrease opportunities for violence to develop.

The practicum site included the EH and SED classrooms which were large, airy, well-lighted, thirty feet square rooms. Each room had a kitchen area, a counseling room with a one way mirror, and a bathroom. The EH room was between two self-contained SED classrooms. These three rooms were contained in a recent addition to the high school that was unreachable from within the school corridors. The wing accessed by exiting the high school and going specifically to the EH classroom or the two SED classrooms. Each room had outside doors on two opposite walls. One door lead to a courtyard for exceptional student buses. The other door opened out on two portable units and basketball courts.

There were 57 students attending this school who had been evaluated and designated as EH or SED. Of these 57 students 23 did not

receive any exceptional student education services. This was due to parental or student rejection of these placements. Fifteen students were considered part time and 19 students had full time EH placements. Part time EH students spent some or most of their school day in mainstream classes. Part time students joined their EH peers for a class called Unique Skills that was designed to facilitate the development of living skills, social skills and learning skills.

Student's designated as SED attended a self -contained SED class or the self-contained Adolescent Day Treatment (ADT/SED) Program. The ADT/SED class participated with the EH class in this practicum and was called SED to simplify reporting. Most of the students in these programs had been placed at least three years prior to ninth grade. Two to four new EH and SED placements were made for ninth and tenth graders each year. These placements were frequently for students who had been considered for special placement but testing never occurred due to rejection by student and/or parents or a school-based decision to try other interventions. Eleventh and twelfth graders were rarely placed in EH or SED programs unless decompensation, improvement or other factors indicated a more appropriate placement. EH students were considered emotionally disordered and most of the EH students in this school were also behaviorally disordered.

The academic level of EH and SED students at this school, in general, ranged from fourth through twelfth grade. Some students were also learning disabled and received assistance for these disabilities within their settings because the need for EH or SED services was

considered primary to their individual educational plans.

Most of the students were in these programs because of poor academic progress that was intellectually and physically inexplicable; continued interpersonal difficulties in developing and sustaining relationships with teachers and peers; regular occurrences of inappropriate behaviors and/or emotionalities; pervasive depression or unhappiness and a tendency to develop somatic or affective symptoms as the result of personal or school-related problems (*Education of Handicapped Children*, Federal Register, *Section 1950s, 1977,* as cited by Salvia and Ysseldyke, 1991: 586-7). Any one or more of these behaviors may have been exhibited by mainstream students or students in other ESE programs.Students in the EH and SED programs tended to exhibit these characteristics markedly over time as defined by Florida Statutes and the State Board of Education Rules (1993).

In order to determine the extent of the problem the author examined the following evidence: discipline referrals, attendance, specific classroom behavior observations (see Appendix A, p. 58), and student (Table 1) and staff surveys (Table 2) administered prior to the intervention (Appendices B , p. 60, and C, p.62, respectively). The student and staff pre-intervention surveys served as a needs assessment.

SED students clearly expressed the need for better ways of handling conflict while only 50 percent of their EH counterparts felt that students needed better ways of handling conflict. EH students moved closer to recognizing some need for better handling of conflicts when it

came to teacher/student conflicts. Both groups felt that they were unfairly dealt with by administrators when they had conflicts with other students. Most SED students did not indicate that they had learned about handling conflicts in school but did respond that they would like to learn about it in school. At least half of both groups thought it would be useful to learn how to solve conflicts. Table 1 includes the questions in the student survey and the student responses.

Table 1

Student Response to
Pre-Intervention Conflict Survey

Students need better ways of handling conflicts.		
SED	YES 100%	NO 00%
EH	YES 50%	NO 50%
Students and teachers need better ways of handling conflicts.		
SED	YES 100%	NO 00%
EH	YES 75%	NO 25%
I have learned about solving conflicts from my classroom studies.		
SED	YES 17%	NO 83%
EH	YES 58%	NO 42%
I would like to learn about handling conflicts in a better way.		
SED	YES 83%	NO 17%
EH	YES 33%	NO 67%
When conflicts with other students cause a problem for me in school I feel that teachers deal with me fairly.		
SED	YES 17%	NO 83%
EH	YES 25%	NO 75%
When conflicts with other students cause a problem for me in school I feel that administrators deal with me fairly.		
SED	YES 40%	NO 60%
EH	YES 16.7%	NO 83.3%
I think that it would be useful for me to learn how to solve conflicts in a reasonable way.		
SED	YES 60%	NO 40%
EH	YES 58.3%	NO 41.7%

EH/n=12 SED/n=6

Staff members advocated for better ways for students to handle conflicts. Most indicated that even administration and staff would profit from new conflict management strategies. Although 70 percent of the staff responded that their area of curriculum addressed conflict management skills, 80 percent of this group did not identify it as adequate. Twenty-eight percent of staff members felt that the school had an effective program for managing conflicts while 44 percent felt the school did not and 28 percent had no opinion. Table 2 contains staff questions and responses.

Table 2

Staff Response to
Pre-Intervention Conflict Survey

Question	Response		
	Yes	No	No opinion
*Students need improved methods for handling conflicts.	28		
*New strategies are needed for administration/staff in handling conflicts.	24	1	3
*Does your area of curriculum/ exposure address conflict management skills?	20	8	0
*If yes, is the curriculum/ exposure adequate?	3	16	1
*Does the school have an effective program for managing conflicts?	8	12	8

n=28

The first quarter of the school year contained 43 days or 258 class periods. In measuring the time spent in class by subtracting absences the EH class, as a collective, lost 32 percent of instructional time. Eight percent of that time was the result of excused absences. The SED class lost 18 percent with 22 percent of that time attributable to excused absences.

Of 21 EH students 19 received 150 discipline referrals since the beginning of school. Twenty-seven percent of the referrals were level 1 offenses which included impulsive behaviors and violation of school policies such as tardiness, being in unauthorized parts of the school, aggressive acts and dress code violations. Forty-three percent of the referrals were level 2 offenses which included classroom disruptions, skipping class, possession of tobacco, leaving class without permission, truancy, possession of toy weapon, lewd and lascivious behavior, defacing school property, and fighting. Thirty percent of the referrals were level 3 referrals which included use of profanity, obscene gestures, abusive language, defiance of authority, disrespect for staff members, malicious actions or fighting, hitting a staff member, selling substance and substance related items, having a weapon, theft, sexual harassment or misconduct, taking part in a riot, arson bomb threats, extortion, intimidating or threatening staff or students with violence, and harassment of school staff or students.

Members of the SED class worked within a level system which handled most problems within the class setting. Only rarely would out of school suspensions occur. Measurement of the effectiveness of

conflict management techniques with this group was based on a comparative staff review of anecdotal records prior to and after the intervention. Based on the anecdotal records there were many conflictual incidents that the staff felt could be handled more effectively by students if they had conflict resolution skills.

Outcome Objectives

The following goals and objectives were projected for this practicum. The author's goal was that students and staff would gain an increased awareness of the value of conflict resolution strategies for EH and SED students. Expected outcomes were that students and staff who participated in the practicum would utilize appropriate conflict management skills in their daily interactions as an alternative to unresolved conflict and violence.

The proposed objectives were:

1. Over a period of twelve weeks EH and SED students will show a 25 percent increase in conflict management strategies as measured by staff and student surveys.

2. Over a period of twelve weeks there will be a decrease of 20 percent in the number of EH and SED discipline referrals as measured by number of discipline referrals.

3. Over a period of twelve weeks EH and SED students will display a 25 percent decrease in conflictual behavior as measured by the Target Behavior Observation Form and staff feedback.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

An in-depth review of relevant professional literature disclosed a concern for the increase of conflict and violence within American schools. A developing body of knowledge and resources to support strategies for managing violence and resolving conflict was also in evidence. The literature covered a range of interventions at both macro and micro levels.

Macro interventions included studies of school violence from an ecological perspective conducted by Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) and Russell (1990) which clearly called for the creation of smaller schools or reducing the numbers of students attending larger ones (Alexander and Curtis, 1995; Moyers, 1995). Macro level community programs developed within the past seven years included the Community Youth Gang Services (CYGS) in Los Angeles, the Omega Boys Club in San Francisco, Prothrow-Stith's *Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents* and *Working Towards Peace* developed by the Lions Clubs International (DeJong, 1995) .

National and community campaigns were mounted to increase school safety and security (Alexander and Curtis, 1995; Moyers, 1995),

and reduce child abuse, domestic violence, teen dating violence, drug abuse and the availability of weapons of violence (DeJong 1995; Alexander and Curtis, 1995; Jones and Krisberg, 1994; Moyers, 1995).

While considering violence and conflict at the micro level, the American Psychological Association developed the Commission on Youth Violence (CYV) to investigate the growing body of literature on youth violence. CYV observed that a number of strategies decreasing violence was included in many programs. The strategies were developed to either assist individual perpetrators, victims and witnesses of violence or to assist change agents working with family, peer, school and community behaviors that fostered or perpetuated violence and conflict. The Commission on Youth Violence stated " that a plethora of intervention programs had been launched; however, many programs were created essentially for service delivery without theoretical justification or intention to to study program effectiveness" (Alexander and Curtis, 1995, p. 75). CYV publicized the results of research indicating the efficacy of programs that advocate for early intervention in order to reduce the factors that contributed to violence and "clinical dysfunctions" during childhood and adolescence. Such programs included interventions that provided home visitation programs for at-risk families as well as preschool and school programs that teach and improve pro-social skills "by fostering nonviolent norms, decreasing the opportunities for nonviolent acts and inhibiting the aggressive acts that manifest themselves during childhood and adolescence" (Alexander and Curtis, 1995, p.76).

Prothrow-Stith (1995), Assistant Dean for Government and Community Programs at the Harvard School of Public Health, acknowledged that medical intervention merely patches up the victims of violence. The treatment of wounds alone is not the answer. "Preventing violence requires a comprehensive response that includes public health strategies" (Prothrow-Stith, 1995, p. 1). In applying the public health model to conflict and violence Prothrow-Stith (1995) suggested that the problems of conflict and violence be understood on three different levels: primary, secondary and tertiary.

Primary violence prevention strategies made nonviolence the norm through the " redefinition of role models, creation of problem-solving strategies, and reward of nonviolent problem solving." The types of programs that developed primary violence prevention included use of the "media, education, peer leadership and mediation, and community based training programs" (Prothrow-Stith, 1995, p. 1).

Secondary violence prevention strategies identified children at risk. Such programs included "mentoring, individual and group counseling, in-school suspension, first offender programs, and special efforts for hospitalized children who were shot or stabbed" (Prothrow-Stith, 1995, p. 1). Prothrow-Stith (1995) also recommended secondary violence prevention programs for children who were victims and witnesses of street and family violence.

Tertiary violence prevention included the least cost effective interventions taken by the legal and judicial system to "arrest, prosecute, defend, incarcerate and rehabilitate " the perpetrators according to

Prothrow-Stith (1995, p. 1). Juvenile justice professionals agreed that juvenile and adult justice systems did not decrease violent crimes alone (Jones and Krisberg, 1994).

Horne, Glaser, Sayger, and Wright, (1992) noted that intervention strategies using a cognitive-behavioral approach to preventing conduct disorders, which were frequently conflictual and violent, were comprised of eleven components and included social competence, behavioral self-control strategies and peer counseling. The re-emergence of corporal punishment as a violence-reduction intervention to correct disruptive behavior had been challenged by Payne (1989) and Straus (1991). Straus (1991) concluded after studying data from the National Family Violence Survey that while physical punishment immediately reduced negative behaviors, long-term negative consequences such as adolescent delinquency and adult abusive behaviors increased.

A national 1993 Louis Harris Survey on Violence in American Schools commissioned by Met Life strongly indicated that violence has become a serious problem. The types of violence listed were: verbal abuse, threats to students and teachers, fighting, stealing and threats with guns and knives. Most of the acts of violence occur in the school building and on school grounds. Three main causes of violence were said to be lack of supervision at home, lack of family involvement in the schools and exposure to violence on mass media (Brooks, 1994). DeJong focused on "family disruption, rampant use of alcohol and other drugs, poor quality schools, widespread joblessness and community disorganization" (1995, p. 4).

Jones and Krisberg (1994) surveyed a number of programs to assist violent juvenile offenders in response to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and the Children's Defense Fund proclamation that the problem of violence among the young is a major problem confronting our nation and has reached epidemic proportion. The critical characteristics of successful programs included: "continuous case management, effective reintegration and re-entry services, opportunities to develop self esteem through achievement and program decision making, clear and consistent consequences for misconduct, enriched educational and vocational programs and a diversity of of family and individual counseling" (Jones and Krisberg, 1994, p.37). The programs reviewed were alternatives to institutionalization for serious juvenile offenders.

Krisberg and Austin (as cited by Jones and Krisberg, 1994, p. 30)) studied a small, community-based, secure program for incidence and prevalence of recidivism in 1989. The setting included a statewide program in Massachusetts with subjects between the ages of seven and seventeen. The Massachusetts Division of Youth Services placed 15 percent of youthful offenders in locked programs. The rest were placed in homes, foster care, day treatment programs and intensive supervision. Some programs even allowed for individualized treatment plans.

Jones and Krisberg (1994, p. 38) found a significant decrease in the "incidence and severity of offending in the twelve months after release into community programs." Two years later the decreases in re-offending were maintained. Massachusetts found that funding programs

such as this was ultimately more cost effective than housing the lengthy incarcerations of adult offenders.

A year prior to his work in Massachusetts Krisberg and his colleagues studied a range of programs that were considered to be small, community-based and secure in Utah. The population ranged in age from seven to seventeen and was statewide. Krisberg measured the incidence of prevalence and recidivism. Large declines in the incidence of correctional recidivism were observed. The program, as in Massachusetts, eliminated large training schools substituting small, secure facilities that were "intensively staffed and programmed, and youth gradually returned to their communities through a series of less restrictive programs" (Jones and Krisberg, 1994, p.38).

Barton and Butts, as cited by Jones and Krisberg (1994), studied three versions of intensive supervision in 1988 in lieu of commitment to state facilities in Wayne County, Michigan. The population included subjects ranging in age from seven to seventeen. The outcome measures included incidence of recidivism and self-reported delinquency. The experimental group matched the control group for recidivism. The intensive supervision group performed better on self-report .

Greenwood and Turner, as cited by Jones and Krisberg (1994), studied the effects of a wilderness program in 1987 by the name of VisionQuest in San Diego, California as an alternative to placement in a county correctional facility. The population ranged in age from ten to seventeen. The study sought to measure the prevalence of recidivism

VisionQuest clients outperformed the group in the correctional facility.

Criminologists and public health experts found that dysfunctional families, disorganized communities, substance abuse and dependence, unsympathetic schools and economic uncertainty contribute to violence (DeJong, 1995, p. 4). It was recognized that the rescuing of individual children from chaotic environments is not enough. The environments themselves must be changed..

DeJong (1995) reported that the Community Youth Gang Services (CYGS), a fourteen year old program in Los Angeles, California, created partnerships with police, schools and other community organizations to prevent youth from joining gangs, to intervene with gang members and supported residents in gaining control of their neighborhoods. CYGS was a multi-faceted project that not only targets students at risk as outlined by secondary violence prevention criteria but has affected community norms on a primary violence prevention level.

CYGS trained and mobilized outreach teams to serve neighborhoods through prevention, mediation and intervention in gang-related conflicts. The teams had portable communication technology and a twenty-four hour hotline. The outreach teams also actively campaigned to dissuade at-risk youths from joining gangs. A fifteen week course for students at risk called *Career Paths* was available in grades four through six. This course explored the dangers of being in a gang and provided alternatives to gang membership. After this students at risk were matched up with mentors for "tutoring, counseling and and recreational activities."

Job development, social skills and job-readiness training were also an essential part of this program and involved employers who were willing to employ ex-gang members. CYGS had an annual budget of $3.5 million. The funding for it came from county and local government agencies and private contributions (DeJong, 1995).

CYGS, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation and the Los Angeles Police Department, installed a late night basketball league as a result of the success of the first league of its type initiated in Baltimore In the mid-1980s. Not only did this allow youths and community members to become more familiar with each other it also prevented or reduced youth violence.

In response to the African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child," two former school teachers founded the Omega Boys Club for African-American youth, both boys and girls, who were considered to be "at high risk for violence and other problems." (DeJong, 1995, p.8). The gateway symptoms which confronted high schools included chronic truancy, school withdrawal, drug use, unemployment, underdeveloped social skills and violence. These were the criteria used for identifying potential club members.

The Omega Boys Club utilized individual and family mentors and peer counselors. New members made a pledge to remain drug-free and nonviolent. Academic programs promoted improved school performance, higher education and employment training for non-college bound members. Family meetings encouraged families to honor traditional African-American culture values which respected elders as teachers,

fostered the extended family, supported achievement and education, and promoted the belief that individuals make a difference (DeJong, 1995).

Teen dating violence was developed in 1988 when a teacher in Austin, Texas asked a shelter for battered women to do something about violence in teenage relationships among high school students. Today the Teen Dating Violence Project (TDVP) assists students at risk in "establishing safe and healthy dating relationships" in eight high schools and middle schools (DeJong, 1995, p. 9).This project involved collaboration between the Shelter for Battered Women, the public school system and the local health department. Educational and group counseling methods combined to provide information and meet special needs. Assertiveness training, techniques for resolving conflicts nonviolently and social skills were developed. Students were self-referred as well as referred by administrators, teachers, school nurses and counselors (DeJong, 1995).

Brilliant (1995) examined school- based curricula designed to prevent or reduce violence and found that the range of approaches was broad and included "conflict resolution, cognitive mediation, life-skills training, and crime prevention, among others." A firearm violence prevention program called STAR (Straight Talk About Risks) was designed to reduce the number of students injured or killed by firearms in kindergarten through grade twelve.

The curriculum followed the research on substance abuse prevention programs that suggested that effective programs do more than just provide information. An effective program needed to emphasize

social skills that "enable children and adolescents to resist negative peer pressure," The STAR program was available in a Spanish/English edition. It was developed by the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence in Washington, D.C.

Brilliant (1995, p. 10) also cited two violence prevention curriculum models that utilized "habit of thought theory" in effecting cognitive changes. The underlying belief was that violence is a learned behavior that can be unlearned. One such violence prevention program was Viewpoints developed by the Center for Law-Related Education in California and had a high frequency of careful evaluation. Originally implemented in a juvenile correctional facility it was so successful in reducing violence among inmates that several school systems were implementing it.

A similar program was developed for kindergarten through eighth grade and was called Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum. This curriculum, developed in Seattle, Washington, facilitated the development of characteristics and skills that research indicated was lacking in perpetrators of violence. These features included: empathy, impulse control, problem solving and anger management skills.

Prothrow-Stith's (1987) Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents was developed in Newton, Massachusetts. The program required ten sessions and was targeted at developing adolescents' comprehension of risk factors for violence. Anger management and conflict resolution constituted an important part of the Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents.

Cheatham (1988) indicated that violence and homicide were effectively addressed by Prothrow-Stith's program. Anger was viewed as a normal human reaction. Statistics and information about perpetrators and victims were provided. Participants were encouraged to contribute their own violence prevention strategies. This curriculum was evaluated and judged to be ideal and successfully provided violence reduction social skills for high risk urban students.

Scherer and Verdi (1994, p.7) worked with a population from middle schools and high schools in central Florida. The students came from "Specific Learning Disability programs, Emotionally Handicapped programs, Severely Emotionally Disturbed programs, motivational alternatives programs" and mainstream classes. The behaviors exhibited most frequently were aggressive behavior, poor impulse control, and involvement with law enforcement. There had been a history of expulsions and arrests.

Many interventions were applied to the conflicts that continued to occur even as this challenging group of students began to settle in. The most "beneficial intervention" was the establishment of an on-call peer mediation program. The program was student-driven after the initial training and publicity. Two of the most successful mediators were a student in the Severely Emotionally Disturbed program and a student perceived by others as "outside the norm." The author, students, teachers and administration considered the use of peer mediation at this alternative school to have been highly successful.

Arbuthnot and Gordon as cited by Zaragoza,Vaughn, McIntosh (1991) conducted a study in 1986 of a social skills program featuring Kohlberg's stages of moral development and education theories for behaviorally disordered students from thirteen to seventeen years old. The program provided exercises to develop " feelings of openness, group identity and cohesion, safety, acceptance, and respect for others' views" (Zaragova, 1991, p. 262). Group discussions, including moral dilemmas and role plays, formed the bulk of this sixteen week program.

Changes were observed in an increase of a half stage in moral development, overall. Tardinesses and referrals dropped close to zero. Students' grades rose and a one year follow-up showed significant effects for moral reasoning, academic performance, teacher ratings, behavior referrals and absenteeism.

Schrumpf, Crawford and Usadel (1991) reported a 95 percent success rate in resolving disputes before they escalated over a period of three years. The intervention made use of trained peer mediators who underwent thorough training in peer mediation and had an opportunity to develop mediation skills through role play before being assigned to peer disputants.

In addition to learning about conflicts, mediators learned how to participate in a system that encouraged understanding and respect of different views, improved communication, developed cooperation in solving a common problem and reached agreements arrived at by both sides.

The preceding summaries were interventions designed to reduce conflict leading to violence. These interventions ranged from total community involvement offering at risk students alternatives to gangs, to whole school programs involving conflict resolution and peer mediation, to a classroom program designed to facilitate the developmental stages of moral reasoning.

Americans, including educators, social theorists and human service professionals have been moved by statistics indicating that violence is on the rise in our schools and communities. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP, as cited by Osher, Osher and Smith, 1994) recognized the need to provide programs for seriously emotionally disturbed students that reflect:

> a reorientation and national preparedness to foster the emotional development and adjustment of children and youth at risk of developing serious emotional disturbance, as the critical foundation for realizing their potential at school, work and in the community (Osher, Osher and Smith, 1994, p.6).

Statistics compiled by the National Longitudinal Transition Study as cited by Osher, Osher and Smith (1994) indicated that 56 percent of behaviorally and emotionally disordered students over 14 years of age dropped out of school. Forty-two percent graduated. Of the 56 percent who drop out of school 73 percent are arrested within five years of leaving school. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) mandated a "free and appropriate education for students with disabilities." The key to this appeared to lie in the effective use and involvement of multiple

stakeholders in developing program goals, objectives, strategies and priorities mandated by IDEA.

There was an abundance of programs and technologies developed to reduce and resolve conflicts and decrease violence. These interventions had been designed for mainstream students as well as students with special needs. The research was beginning to amass for carefully designed peer mediation interventions, school wide adaptation and cooperation, training and a student-directed program with peers mediating peer disputes. The results of recent research favored new developments in peer mediation programs. While the verdict may have been premature, more programs appeared to be reducing conflict and subsequent violence in American inner city schools as well as American suburban, rural and semirural schools based on the review of literature in this chapter.

Solution Strategy

Violence was identified as the leading concern among educators around the world (Moyers, 1995; Stomfay-Stitz,1994; Giuliano,1994; Prothrow-Stith, 1991). Violence has been defined as a force that was directed towards individuals, groups and institutions in the form of harassment and physical assault. Miller (1993) acknowledged the human dimensions of hate, love, jealousy, greed, hunger, poverty, insanity and power which underlie the physical and emotional injuries that contribute to violent reactions. Miller (1993) also pointed out that law enforcement and mental health professionals were deeply concerned about the growth of "random acts of violence" in our society today.

Glasser (1969) was an early advocate of class meetings and spoke out for student resolution of student conflicts. Glasser (1969, 1986, 1990) and Nicholson (1988) recognized that schools handle conflicts based on their culture, structure, process and climate of values and norms. Schrumpf (1991) and Glasser (1990) advocated for structured student forums within schools to discuss problems thereby decreasing the opportunities for unresolved conflicts to escalate.

Research in the early 1980's acknowledged the value of embedding prosocial skills (Goldstein, 1980), values clarification, problem solving,and other structured programs into curriculums in order to develop social skills in students. Between 1985 and 1989 a more precise intervention for managing conflict began to develop in a number of schools (Lam, 1989). Gallant as cited by Tolson, et al (1992) was the first to implement and document the use of mediation in schools in disputes among students in special education programs. The availability of structured mediation programs for school-wide conflict management grew substantially since the mid-eighties.

Schrumpf (1991) asserted that conflict occurred naturally and had been best used to encourage personal change and social growth. He further stated that when students learned to regard conflict as a positive potential in a school environment that supported and modeled effective ways of resolving conflict they evidenced the powerful effects in their own lives.

Porjes (1994) reported that educators had increasingly turned to alternative methods for dealing with conflict within schools. She further

asserted that the use of discussion and compromise were not automatic skills for handling conflict which in itself did not cause violence. Student's reactions to unresolved conflict contributed to violence. Unresolved conflict manifested as: increase in frustration, anger, hurt feelings, strained relationships, physical and verbal assaults and violence.

Robertson (1991) concluded that peer mediation had successfully provided conflict-reducing alternatives to traditional discipline practices which taught important social skills. The study rated the following programs as successful: (1) PROJECT SMART (School Mediators Alternative Resolution Team in several New York City high schools; (2) the Conflict Manager Program implemented in San Francisco and adapted for schools in North Carolina and Tucson, Arizona; (3) the Hawaii Mediation Project; and (4) the Mediation in the Schools Program in New Mexico. These programs claimed to be highly effective. Their training and delivery systems were similar and utilized student peer teams to conduct a structured problem solving "win-win" approach to conflict resolution. Tolson, et al, (1992, p.87) challenged the claims that mediation programs were highly effective having noted that "attempts to evaluate their effectiveness is sparse." In response further research found a significant difference in recidivism between students who received mediation and those who received traditional discipline.

Lam (1989) attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of peer mediation programs proliferating in the eighties. Fourteen programs were uncovered in the United States and Canada. Lam (1989) pointed out that

the success of the programs was based on satisfaction and successful mediation outcomes. Other studies raise the question of client deterioration despite positive mediation outcomes (Lambert, Shapiro, & Bergen, 1986 as cited by Tolson, Mac Donald, and Moriarty, 1992). Tolson, Mac Donald, and Moriarty (1992) suggest that the use of peer mediation was unethical if recipients were harmed by the intervention. It was suggested that attention from popular peers might reinforce conflict.

The school administrators at the practicum site indicated that they were dissatisfied in general with suspension for students with emotional and behavioral problems and disorders (Bashaw, 1994). For E.S.E. students suspension generally did not provide satisfactory experiences for modifying disordered student behaviors. Lengthy or repeated out-of-school suspensions (OSS) were not legal under Public Law 94-142. Walker and Shea (1987) pointed out that suspension is considered by the U.S. Supreme Court to be a necessary tool to maintain order in school; a valuable educational device. For E.S.E students short-term suspension is permitted if the offending behavior is not directly linked to their handicap. Frequently, suspensions were considered to be cool-down periods for out of control students. Conflict and violence continued to escalate even with this kind of intervention (Bashaw, 1994).

Research validated the reduction of youthful offenders' recidivism as a result of having participated in programs that emphasized improved relationship skills and vocational training (Jones and Krisberg, 1994). Miller (1993) reported that teen mediators were very effective in mediating student disputes and conflict mediation had been taken to

correctional institutions for young people. In 1984 the Florida Legislature amended the Student Services Act to include the establishment of programs which addressed conflict management/resolution skill development and conflict prevention in school districts. The school district chosen for this practicum developed a Competence in Conflicts program for elementary, middle and high school guidance counselors in the mid-eighties aimed at achieving "assertive peace in our lives" (Student Services Department, 1985, p.3)

The preceding information created the foundation for the author in choosing to measure the effects of peer mediation skills on conflicts among behaviorally and emotionally disordered high school students. Many programs had been developed that recognized social needs and the potential of the school setting as a natural arena. By harnessing the power of conflict to reduce violence and empowering the emotionally and behaviorally disordered student with the social skills of peer mediation in a manner that encourages generalization to other situations, educators may be on the right track.

CHAPTER III

Method

Background

The implementation plan used during the twelve week practicum intervention phase evolved from the author's examination of growing conflict, intolerance and violence at the practicum site over a period of four years. In 1991, the author collaborated with a school resource officer and a guidance counselor, to found a student group called United Colors. The student-driven and student-named group focused on conflict reduction by recognizing multi-cultural diversity and the value of empowering students to positively influence their environment. Although United Colors had been effective in advocating for respect of human differences through performances and other proactive strategies the author and administrators believed that a peer mediation forum to resolve specific student conflicts was the next step in managing conflict and reducing violence.

The discipline committee designed a schedule of consequences for various offenses and appeared to to be guided by a desire to have classrooms that allowed for instruction and had consistent consequences for school policy infractions. It was the author's opinion that this committee had reasonable plans for mainstream students and little

tolerance for the symptomatic disturbed and disturbing behaviors of the school's EH and SED students. District office administration, school administration and student service personnel were concerned about out-of-school suspensions, especially among the EH and SED population.

Staff members attending a discipline committee meeting at the practicum site were provided with information on peer mediation by the author in early 1994 that was used at another district high school (Bollman and Kall, 1993). While interested in the presentation and literature provided about peer mediation, the school's discipline committee indicated that they had more than they could handle with teaching duties and committee responsibilities at the time. The guidance department indicated that they would not be able to apportion the needed amount of time for this program in the light of their responsibilities but did offer to act as peer mediation advisors, occasionally.

In preparing for this practicum the author visited an alternative school with a successful peer mediation program (Scherer and Verdi, 1994). A staff member at the school agreed to bring peer mediators to the practicum setting to train mainstream students in peer mediation. The author planned this in order to create a peer mediation program among mainstream staff and students so that EH and SED students would be able to interface.

The author set up peer mediation training in the Spring of 1994. Students in the peer mediation program at an alternative high school trained mainstream high school students at the practicum site. Scherer and Verdi (1994), authors and directors of the peer mediation program at this in-district alternative school, defined their school population as being drawn from Specific Learning Disability (SLD) programs, Emotionally Handicapped (EH) programs, Severely Emotionally Disturbed (SED) programs, alternative motivational programs, and mainstream classes. Students within this population had histories which included documentation of aggressive behavior, poor impulse control and involvement with law enforcement.

The author planned an orientation meeting called Meet the Administrators at the suggestion of the school principal, at the beginning of the 1994-95 school year. This meeting took place during the school day and included the 20 trained mainstream students along with 20 new ninth graders already trained in peer mediation at the feeder middle schools. During this meeting the students met with administrators, role played a mediation session and viewed a peer mediation video (Schrumpf, 1992). The assistant principal of student services who was interested in getting the program off the ground began almost immediately by referring students requesting mediation to the author. This was followed by careful planning with the author, the administrator and a social work intern. As a result presentations about peer mediation

were made to the leadership team and the faculty by the author. This set the stage for the practicum. The leadership committee, the school principal, the student services assistant principal, to whom discipline referrals were made, and the EH and SED teachers approved and helped to establish a climate for the operation of the peer mediation program. Of 92 staff members, 24 signed up for two hours of inservice training including teachers and paraprofessionals of the school's EH and SED population.

As a support activity the author received permission to play commercials aired on local television for a campaign promoting tolerance developed by CommUnity an urban violence reduction campaign from Elizabeth Grant, director. The program's mission was to overturn the violent effects of prejudice and intolerance. Posters, bumper stickers and bookmarks were placed around the school and the commercials were viewed on the school's television news every Friday.

The author developed the preceding activities to create a school-wide foundation for peer mediation so that the EH and SED population targeted by the practicum would not operate within a vacuum or in a school setting that was not peer mediation-friendly.

Resources

The human resources used during the 12 week intervention included the high school's principal, assistant principal of student services, and the staff of the EH and SED programs that included two

teachers, three aides and a counselor. Additionally, the author's social work intern, an office assistant, faculty members acting as advisors, peer trainers, the school resource officer, and the school psychologist agreed to assist the author in training, observing, record keeping, monitoring students, scheduling, and on-going assessment.

Materials

The core work for the practicum was Peer Mediation: Conflict Resolution in Schools developed and written by Schrumpf, Crawford and Usadel in 1991. This material was furnished by the district office and had already been acquired with funds from a substance abuse prevention grant. A conflict resolution video produced by the authors of the peer mediation curriculum (Schrumpf, 1992) was available from the district media center and was used for teacher and student training to effectively demonstrate peer mediation in practice. This video was previewed and approved by EH and SED teachers for their populations and provided students with an opportunity to observe other students conducting the peer mediation process.

Master copies of the following forms were stored on computer disc to ensure that a supply was always available: Referral, Report, Contract Form (Appendix D, p. 64), Target Behaviors Form (Appendix A, p. 58), pre and post -intervention survey forms (Appendices B, p. 60; C, p. 62; F, p. 68; and G, p.70) and the Peer Mediation Script. A data base was also established on disc to record mainstream peer mediation occurrences,

peer mediators, disputants, causes of conflict, referral sources and solutions reached. The disc also stored the content for the three inservices; there were two at the beginning of the practicum and one at the conclusion.

Time and Space

Mainstream peer mediations could be scheduled once a day in the clinic conference room during the planning period of a faculty advisor with a pair of student mediators for every pair of student disputants. Post-training provided for the development and maintenance of peer mediation skills for EH and SED peer mediators. This occurred two times a week in the clinic conference room for the duration of the practicum. Within the first three weeks of the practicum intervention the six EH and two SED students, who chose to follow through with peer mediation, selected mediation partners.Thirty percent of the EH class and thirty-three and a third percent of of the SED class committed to serve as peer mediators. The SED class remained relatively stable with the transfer of one student in and one student out of the program. The EH population count was unstable with lengthy out-of-school suspensions, absences due to juvenile justice consequences, new entries and moves. Two of the EH students teamed up with two mainstream students to form two Mainstream/EH peer mediation pairs. The four remaining EH peer mediators formed two mediation pairs. The two SED students formed the SED team and was called upon to mediate mainstream disputes after

having indicated that they wanted to do this.

Throughout the twelve week implementation three inservices were held at the conclusion of the school day in large comfortable rooms for teachers. Each lasted approximately an hour and light refreshments were provided. Participating staff earned 10 inservice credits.

Planning

Pre-intervention planning included developing faculty and student surveys on the need for and effectiveness of conflict management skills. Activities also included collecting discipline referral and attendance data on all participating EH and SED students, scheduling and developing the form for target behavior observations. A peer mediation referral form, logo, and peer mediation script were designed by the author with feedback from participating staff and students to facilitate articulation, quality assurance and identification of the program.

Implementation Stages

The first stage of implementation consisted of presentations by the author to the school leadership team meeting and faculty meeting. A pre-intervention staff survey which served as a needs assessment (Appendix C, p. 62) was filled out by the staff. Staff inservice training was held. During this time the target group was observed (Appendix A, p.58). Discipline referrals were collected and a needs assessment survey was administered to all students in the EH and SED populations.

The second stage was the training stage. Exposure and initial training of all EH and SED students occurred using a video and field trip to the alternative school. A camcorder was used to film training. Three weeks later there were six EH and two SED students interested in learning more about peer mediation. They volunteered to participate in additional peer mediation training that Linda Montgomery, district supervisor of EH and SED programs, had coincidentally arranged for a limited number of EH and SED students from all of the other schools in the district. Mrs. Montgomery permitted the author to bring all eight EH and SED peer mediators to the training even though two students from every school with an EH and/or SED population were planned. Publicity about peer mediation was developed by mainstream, EH and SED students. Parents of EH and SED students were provided with information about mediation (Appendix E, p.66).

The third stage was the implementation of peer mediation within the school day as determined by the author, teacher, administrators and students. The author held practice sessions two times weekly. Provision was made for the time lost and possible decompensation during the winter recess. Students were asked to encourage their parents and family members to use the technique in settling disputes at home, especially over the holidays. Minor corrections, modifications and assessment of the peer mediation referral form (Appendix D, p. 64) were made.

The fourth and final phase coincided with the beginning of the third school quarter. At this point in time the students, teachers and administrators who experienced peer mediation were invited to assess the value of the intervention by filling in post-intervention staff and student response forms (Appendices F, p. 68 and G, p. 70). The post-intervention Target Behavior Count (Appendix A, p. 58) was eliminated because it was felt by the school psychologist, social work intern and author that changes in behavior would be more effectively examined by considering teacher and paraprofessional input. The six EH students and two SED students were given a party by the author to celebrate their participation. The target group's attendance, discipline referrals and pre- and post-intervention questionnaires were examined at the conclusion of the third quarter to assess the effect of conflict management skills acquired during the intervention by the students who participated as EH and SED peer mediators.

The students expressed a desire to continue and said that the experience had been a very fulfilling one. All of the students liked the idea of working with mainstream students. EH students indicated that they believed mediation and resolving conflicts were sometimes easier with mixed EH/mainstream peer mediation teams because of the time many had spent with each other through, what was for some, years of special education placements together. They also reported that they were using peer mediation techniques with friends and families.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The overall goal for this practicum was to examine the effects of peer mediation training on conflicts among behaviorally and emotionally disordered high school students. The three objectives projected in Chapter I to reach the practicum goal attempted to measure changes in the targeted group's utilization of conflict management strategies, discipline referrals and conflictual behaviors. The measurement of these objectives was achieved in the following ways.

Goal number one utilized student (Appendix B, p. 60) and staff surveys (Appendix C, p. 62) administered prior to the intervention to serve as a needs assessment for conflict management skills at the school. The data also provided baseline responses to measure changes in attitudes about conflict management strategies when paired with post-intervention student (Appendix F, p. 68) and staff (Appendix G, p. 70) survey results. Goal number one projected that students would show a 25 percent increase in the use of conflict management strategies as measured by staff and student surveys.

The pre-intervention staff survey (Appendix C, p. 62) indicated that 29 percent of those surveyed believed that the school had an effective

program for managing student conflicts. The post-intervention staff survey (Appendix G, p.70), as shown in Table 3, indicated that 89 percent of the same staff members surveyed prior to the intervention believed that the school now had an effective program for managing student conflicts. This reflected a 60 percent increase in the staff's opinion concerning the effectiveness of the school's new conflict management program. One hundred percent of those responding to the pre-intervention survey agreed that students needed improved methods for handling conflicts. One hundred percent of those responding to the post-intervention survey believed that students had been provided with an effective conflict-management system. This reflected a 100 percent increase in students' conflict management strategies according to staff perception.

Table 3

Staff Response to Post-Intervention Conflict Survey

	YES	NO	No Opinion
Students have been provided with a framework (peer mediation) for handling student conflicts.	28		
Students showed improved methods for handling conflicts.	19		9
I have participated in conflict resolution (peer mediation) training.	25	3	
If yes, do you feel you have acquired new strategies for handling conflicts?	25		
Does the school have an effective program for managing student conflicts?	26		2

n=28

Table 4 shows that 100 percent of the EH and SED students in the target group indicated an increase in the ability to handle conflict. SED students had a very positive response and reported good effects as the result of using peer mediation skills in general. EH students matched their SED peers in feeling that they had benefitted from learning peer mediation, and had a better way of handling conflicts. EH students did not appear as confident in using their newly acquired conflict management skills with classmates, family or friends. All participants reported that they benefitted from learning peer mediation and would like to be peer mediators next year.

Table 4

Student Response to
Post-intervention Conflict Survey

Students now have a better way to handle conflicts.		
SED	YES 100%	NO 0%
EH	YES 100%	NO 0%
Peer mediation has helped when there is conflict between students and teachers.		
SED	YES 100%	NO 0%
EH	YES 83%	NO 17%
I feel more capable of working with others when there is conflict.		
SED	YES 100%	NO 0%
EH	YES 67%	NO 33%
I have benefitted from learning peer mediation.		
SED	YES 100%	NO 0%
EH	YES 100%	NO 0%
I have used peer mediation skills with my family and friends.		
SED	YES 100%	NO 0%
EH	YES 67%	NO 33%
I would like to be a peer mediator next year.		
SED	YES 100%	NO 0%
EH	YES 100%	NO 0%

EH/n=6 SED/n=2

Goal number two measured the dynamics of discipline referrals against the success criterion that projected a 20 percent decrease in the number of EH and SED discipline referrals. Discipline referrals were gathered for 24 weeks and were sorted for conflictual behaviors. This data collection provided data for two 12 week periods of (1) no intervention, and (2) application of intervention. Attendance,

suspensions and discipline referrals were observed to search for patterns of the consequences of discipline referrals for students demonstrating conflictual behaviors.

Discipline referrals for both the target group and the nonparticipating EH and SED students were examined. Level one offenses decreased by 74 percent. Level two offenses decreased by 49 percent. Level three offenses decreased by 34 percent.

Excused and unexcused absences, inschool suspensions (ISS), out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and tardies were examined for the target group of 8 EH and SED students who participated as peer mediators and for the 12 EH and SED students who did not participate as peer mediators. The unit of measurement chosen was in classroom periods rather than whole days. The target group showed an overall decrease of 27 percent in time not spent in the classroom whereas EH and SED students who did not participate as peer mediators showed an overall increase of 23 percent percent of time not spent in the classroom. An examination of ISS and OSS data occurred with the following results. The target group decreased ISS time by 82 percent and OSS time by 4 percent. The control group decreased time spent in ISS by 10 percent and increased time spent in OSS by 49 percent.

Goal number three involved the measurement of teachers and staff commentary on student response to conflictual situations by contrasting the frequency of student conflicts from pre- to post-intervention. An evaluation was made for each student by teachers and staff showing specific changes in each participant. Anecdotal records,

staff comments and student feedback formed the basis for whether a 25 percent decrease in conflictual behavior occurred.

Although target behaviors were measured on the Target Behavior Count Sheet (Appendix A) by the social work intern and the school psychologist at the beginning of the implementation there were changes in the EH classroom makeup that would have made post implementation target behavior measurement in this form invalid.

The target behaviors were discussed. Teachers and paraprofessionals concurred that the target group developed conflict management skills over the twelve weeks of the intervention to a marked degree. When conflictual opportunities arose the target group took advantage of them and utilized the conflict management strategies that they had been trained in at least 40 percent of the time. The participating SED teacher and paraprofessionals noted that the students who formed the peer mediation team in their class were using these skills on a daily basis with their classmates. These students agreed that not only were they using conflict management skills learned through peer mediation training and practice in the classroom, but in their homes and with their acquaintances, as well.

The expected outcomes of the proposed objectives of this practicum were exceeded. This indicated that the techniques of peer mediation had the effect of lowering incidents of conflictual behaviors among the emotionally and behaviorally disordered students who participated in this practicum.

The unexpected events -intervening variables- that occurred during the implementation resulted from human circumstances and interactions. The EH teacher who agreed to participate in this practicum was dismissed and a new EH teacher was hired. The role of this author and the practicum purpose were not completely supported by the three new staff members (teacher, paraprofessional and therapist). Personal reasons caused the new EH teacher to miss the first training at the alternative school. The SED teacher, essentially, was not present at this meeting either having followed the bus by private vehicle. Upon arrival at the alternative school an SED student became uncontrollable and had to be brought back to the practicum site. By the time the SED teacher returned to the alternative school the training was over. Two other new staff members accompanied this trip and, in the author's opinion, appeared to be dealing with early stages of new employment and a challenging population. The EH staff viewed the trip to the alternative school for peer mediation training as a treat instead of a treatment and were concerned that all EH students were permitted to go. Neither teacher chose to accompany the second training several weeks later and the staff members selected to accompany this group were still dealing with the newness of their assignment and did not, according to this author, contribute to the cohesion-building stages of this practicum.

The original design of this practicum included a mainstream installation of standard peer mediation but did not include an EH/SED collaboration with mainstream students. The EH/SED students who elected to become peer mediators revealed a strong desire to participate.

Several mainstream students wanted to pair up with their EH friends to form peer mediation teams. The student team from SED wanted to participate in mainstream mediations as well as utilize the newly acquired skills with their classmates. These unexpected responses were used to modify the experiences afforded the EH and SED students' experiences.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

> Schools can prevent violence by insuring that all children are well served academically and by teaching children to manage conflict and anger. When children learn how to assert their own needs and opinions without trampling on the rights of other people, when they learn to express their angry feelings without losing control or hurting people, they have mastered skills that enhance their lives and the life of the community. There is no better place than school, where diverse groups congregate, to learn these important lessons (Prothrow-Stith, 199, p. 172).

Numerous factors contributed to the success of this practicum with its inquiry into the effects that conflict management training can have among students in EH and SED programs. The author observed that involved, credentialed, infield staff members are necessary ingredients to EH and SED programs if positive change is to occur. Interest in "at-risk" students coupled with a willingness to work effectively with other staff members appeared to be important staff criteria in programs that work to benefit EH and SED students. Additional contributing factors to the practicum's success included support from the administration, student enthusiasm, school support and the expressed need for conflict management and violence reduction strategies.

The practicum site administration, staff and students expressed an interest in continuing the program next year based on the improvements noted as a result of conflict management through the use of peer mediation. District level supervisors and school administrators need to make efforts to train teachers and paraprofessionals about the benefits of supporting programs that teach conflict resolution skills to EH/SED staff as well as the rest of the student population.

This practicum served to notify those who participated that peer mediation can have a positive effect on conflict management and reduce violence. It was the author's intention to build upon the foundation created by this practicum. The author planned to:

1. Recommend that the project be expanded and implemented on a continuous basis at the practicum site,
2. Provide more instructors at the site with opportunities to become peer mediation advisors,
3. Provide material that can be used as resources to other schools considering implementation of peer mediation programs,
4. Provide inservices and make this practicum report available for staff development at the district level encouraging other EH and SED staff members who want to duplicate the project or develop their own peer mediation programs,

5. Present a report of the practicum to school social work colleagues at the monthly social work meeting and the annual Florida Association of School Social Workers' Conference, and

6. Write an article about this experience for a professional journal.

There were no panaceas for the elimination or, at the very least, substantial reduction of violence. It appeared incumbent upon educators to realize that each EH and SED student was uniquely special and capable of learning and applying conflict resolution skills. Successful programs across the country featured care and concern as the foundation for school and community projects that creatively used human resources to bring about change. With these elements in place students were considered capable of handling conflict and reducing violence.

As a post script, the author was named Social Worker of the Year 1995 by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) for the county. The author went on to be named Social Worker of the Year 1995 for a large metropolitan area and its surrounding counties. The theme of the year established by NASW was *Violence: We Make the Difference.*

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Target Behavior Observation

Class_____**Room**_____**Teacher**_____

Observer_____**Date**_____**Time Span**_____

IV	**IG**
TV	**TG**
NONC	

IV Insulting verbalizations
IG Insulting gestures
NONC Noncompliant behavior
TV Threatening verbalizations
TG Threatening gestures

Please record one strike for each observation of the target behaviors demonstrated within a twenty minute period.

Thank you.

APPENDIX B

Pre-Intervention Student Survey

Students need better ways of handling conflicts.
YES _____ NO _____

Students and teachers need better ways of handling conflicts.
YES _____ NO _____

I have learned about solving conflicts from my classroom studies.
YES _____ NO _____

I would like to learn about handling conflicts in a better way.
YES _____ NO _____

When conflicts with other students cause a problem for me in school I feel that teachers deal with me fairly.
YES _____ NO _____

When conflicts with other students cause a problem for me in school I feel that administrators deal with me fairly.
YES _____ NO _____

I think that it would be useful for me to learn how to solve conflicts in a reasonable way.
YES _____ NO _____

Comments:

APPENDIX C

Pre-Intervention Staff Survey

Conflict Management Skills Training Needs Assessment

1. Students need improved methods for handling conflicts.

YES_____ NO_____ No Opinion_____

2. New strategies are needed for administration/staff in handling conflicts.

YES_____ NO_____ No Opinion_____

3. Does your area of curriculum or exposure to sudents address conflict management skills?

YES____ NO_____

If yes, is the curriculum or exposure adequate?

YES_____ NO_____ No Opinion_____

4. Does the school have an effective program for managing student conflicts?

YES_____ NO_____ No Opinion_____

5. Please list suggestions/recommendations for addressing this issue.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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APPENDIX D

PEER MEDIATION
REFERRAL/REPORT/CONTRACT FORM

MEDIATORS:_____ Date:_____

_____

STUDENTS INVOLVED IN CONFLICT :

Student A_____Date____ Grade_____Period_____

Student B_____ Grade_____Period_____

TYPE OF CONFLICT:
- ☐ fighting ☐ teasing ☐ threatening ☐ rumor
- ☐ pushing ☐ property ☐ name calling ☐ friendship
- ☐ other_____

PLACE OF CONFLICT:
- ☐ classroom ☐ hall ☐ cafeteria ☐ commons
- ☐ bathroom ☐ outside ☐ other_____

MEDIATION REQUESTED BY:
- ☐ Student(s) ☐ Teacher ☐ Counselor ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Signature of person requesting mediation_____

SCHEDULE MEDIATION: Immediately Within week

RESOLUTION:

Student A agrees to:_____ Student B agrees to:_____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Signature Student A Signature Student B

CONFLICT RESOLVED? YES NO _____

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APPENDIX E

Nov. 2, 1995

Dear Parent,

Our class has been chosen to participate in the use of Peer Mediation. This is a way for students to deal with conflicts that arise as a part of everyday life. The class will attend a special training that will be held at _____ Alternative School in _____ on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 1994. We will depart from _____ at 9:00 AM and return by 2:00 PM. For those on free and reduced lunch a bagged lunch will be provided. For those who are not on free and reduced lunch please bring your own lunch. We will meet the Peer Mediators from _____ Alternative School and they will show us how they deal with conflict.

There are some really great students at _____ Alternative School who have used Peer Mediation at their school for a while and they want to teach you how to do it.

You will hear more about Peer Mediation and the way it allows students to help students to resolve conflict by coming up with "win-win" solutions. In fact you may even want to use some of the ideas with your own family and friends.

Please return permission slip as soon as possible. We've ordered the bus and the people at _____ are getting ready for us.

We will have a great day and possibly learn to do something that we can use for the rest of our lives.

Sincerely,

ADT Teacher

ADT Therapist

Kathryn Kirleis, L.C.S.W.
School Social Worker

Paraprofessional

District Wide Accreditation -- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

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APPENDIX F

Post-Intervention Student Survey

---

1. Students now have a better way to handle conflicts.
   YES_____ NO_____

2. Peer mediation has helped when there is conflict between students and teachers.
   YES_____ NO_____

3. I feel more capable of working with others when there is conflict.
   YES_____ NO_____

4. I have benefited from learning peer mediation.
   YES_____ NO_____

5. I have used the peer mediation skills I learned at school with my family and friends.
   YES_____ NO_____

6. I would like to learn more about peer mediation.
   YES_____ NO_____

7. I would like to be a peer mediator next year.
   YES_____ NO_____

Additional comments:

APPENDIX G

Post-Intervention Staff Survey

1. The students have been provided a framework (peer mediation) for handling student conflicts.

YES_____ NO_____ No Opinion_____

2. The students showed improved methods for handling conflicts

YES_____ NO_____ No Opinion_____

3. I have participated in conflict resolution (peer mediation) training.

YES_____ NO_____

If yes, do you feel that you have acquired new strategies for handing conflicts?

YES_____ NO_____ No Opinion_____

4. Does the school have an effective program for managing student conflicts?

YES_____ NO_____ No Opinion_____

5. Please list suggestions/recommendations for further improvement.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____